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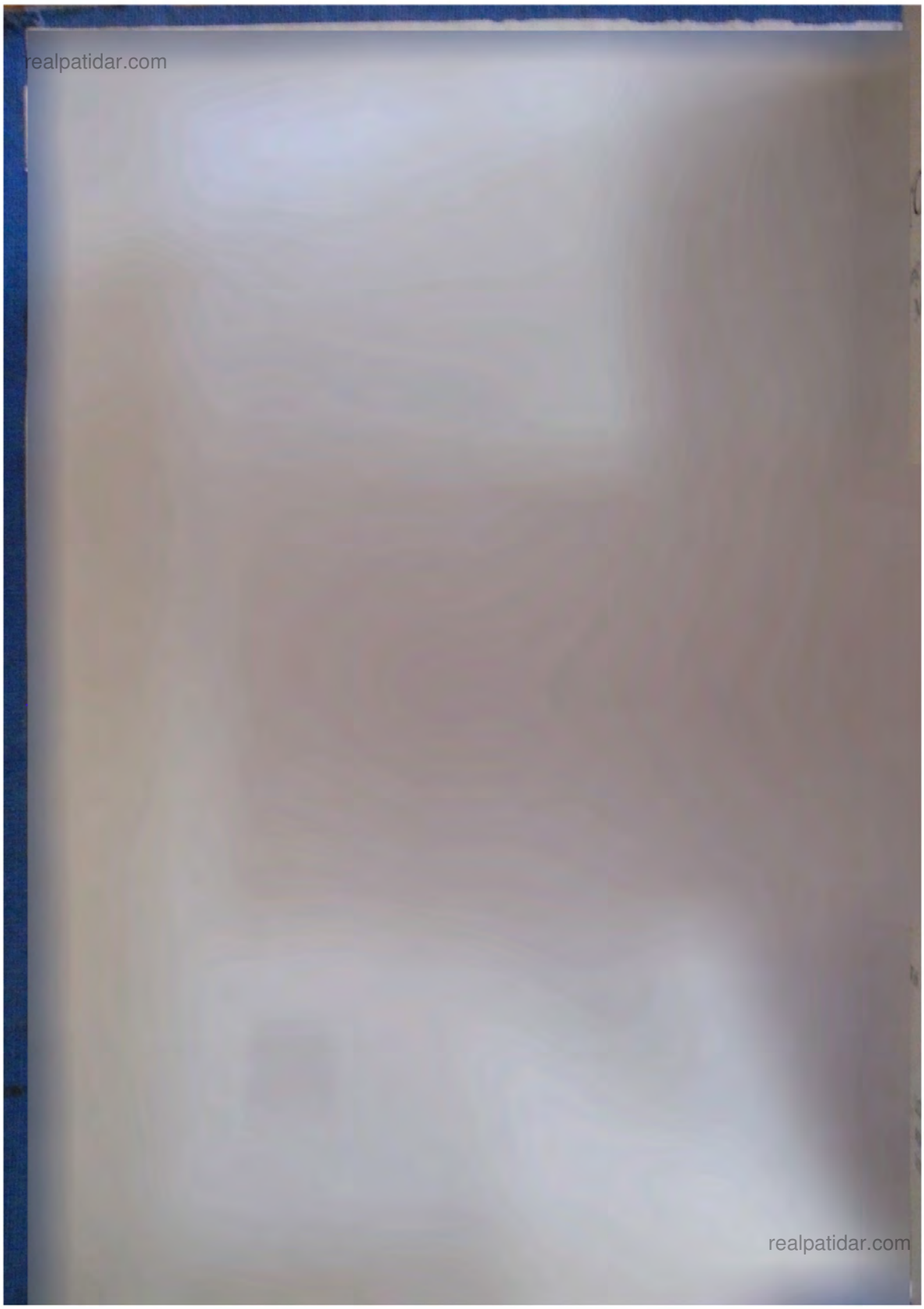

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A HISTORY OF GUJARAT

Including a Survey of its Chief Architectural Monuments and Inscriptions

BY

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With an Introduction by
SIR E. DENISON ROSS, C.I.E.
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VOL. I
FROM A.D. 1297–8 to A.D. 1573
With one hundred and seven half-tone plates

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO. LTD.
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO
1938

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PREFACE

It is now eighty-one years since the late Mr. Justice Kinloch Forbes of the Bombay Civil Service published in London the first systematic work bearing on the history of Gujarat under the title of *Ras Mala*, or *Hindoo Annals of the Province of Goozerat in Western India*. As the writer of a Memoir on his career in a later edition of this work well expressed it, 'Forbes has done for the Rajputs of Gujarat, what Tod did for Rajasthan and Grant Duff for the Marathas, while in some ways he excels either'. Since his time, however, the materials for the history of this province, which the Emperor Aurangzeb once described as 'the beauty and ornament of India', have received considerable additions in many directions. The annals of early and medieval Gujarat have been reconstructed on the basis of coins, copperplates and inscriptions over and above the literary works and bardic accounts which were so effectively utilised by Forbes in his own inimitable manner. Moreover, Forbes devoted his attention primarily to the Hindu or Rajput side of the history of Gujarat, and to their social institutions, manners and customs. The long Muslim period of Gujarat history, extending over four centuries and a half, was only incidentally treated by him, and it is in this particular direction that the last fifty years have seen a great increase in the sources of our information, not only from editions or translations of formal histories written in Persian and Arabic, but also as will be seen from the Bibliography, from the contributions made by students of epigraphy, numismatics and archæology. For the British period of Gujarat history likewise, there exists a vast and valuable mass of untapped historical material in the official documents located in the Government Records Office at

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Bombay which awaits patient study and research by competent historical investigators.

This great increase in the materials for the history of Gujarat, and the fact that no historical work of a sufficiently comprehensive or critical character for the post-Rajput period was available for the perusal of the educated public, or for consultation by officials stationed in various capacities in the districts of Gujarat, led me over twenty years ago, to attempt to fill up this hiatus for at least the four centuries and a half during which the province was under Muslim sway. I found also that my own students at Gujarat College knew much more about what took place at Delhi, Agra and other distant centres in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries than they did about the history and the monuments of their own province during the same period. I was also impressed by the fact that no adequate knowledge of the unique architectural remains to be found in the capital city and other towns of Gujarat was available to the intelligentia of the province, who had neither the leisure nor the facility for acquiring the information contained in the volumes of the Bombay District Gazetteers or in the valuable series of works published by the Archæological Survey of India. I decided, therefore, to combine with the purely historical matter, a study of all the important monuments of the province, with the exposition of which the names of Fergusson, Burgess and Cousens have been intimately and honourably associated.

The work thus undertaken has grown in course of time to a bulk which I had not anticipated, and it has occupied, during the past two decades, whatever leisure I could spare from other duties. The present volume brings the historical narrative down to the year 1573 when Gujarat became a province of the Mughal Empire. The subsequent history till

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the end of Aurangzeb's reign, or perhaps a little later, will be treated in the second volume, the manuscript of which is nearly ready. The illustrations in this volume, comprising over one hundred half-tone plates, relate mostly to the period of the independent Gujarat Saltanat when the rulers as also their great nobles vied with each other in adorning their capital city and its neighbourhood with magnificent monuments.

I may add that the term Gujarat has been used in this book in the wider sense, and the work comprises the general history of both continental and peninsular Gujarat, which latter is better known under the name of Saurashtra or Kathiawar. It must not be forgotten that the fortunes of the peninsula have from the earliest times been closely associated with those of the continental districts, and that the power that held sway on the mainland has generally always exercised suzerainty over the group of Hindu Princes, many of them of ancient lineage, who held sway in Kathiawar. The most important capital city of the peninsula has for over a thousand years been Junagadh, and here resided, from the 15th century onward, the Fauzdars or Governors who administered Kathiawar on behalf first of the Gujarat Sultans and later of the Mughal Subahdars or Viceroys at Ahmadabad. In the disruption and subsequent collapse of Mughal authority in Gujarat during the first half of the eighteenth century, the Mughal representatives stationed at Junagadh made themselves gradually independent, and managed to retain their power over the fertile and picturesque lands of Sorath against the inroads of the Marathas. From the last Imperial Babi governor of Kathiawar is descended the comparatively modern line of the Nawabs of Junagadh.

For complying with my request to write an Introduction to this volume, I am indebted to Sir E. Denison Ross, C.I.E.,

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who was, till a few months ago, Director of the London School of Oriental Studies, which has come to hold, during the years that he has been at its head, the unique position of an Imperial institution. There are few, if any, who have made so close a study of the period of the Gujarat Saltanat as Sir Denison has done, and by his discovery when at Calcutta of the autograph manuscript of Hajji-ad-Dabir's *Arabic History*, and by his careful editing of the same, he has put all students of the history of the province under a great obligation. As an original work with which to compare the information given by Firishta and by the author of the *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, the value of the 'Arabic History' can hardly be exaggerated.

Though Ahmadabad was for many centuries one of the greatest Muslim capitals in all India, and though its regal and viceregal courts were known for their patronage of learning and of men of letters, utilitarian interests have in recent years become so dominant in the city, that I have for years ploughed more or less a lonely furrow in my self-imposed task, and have found few with whom I could discuss the subject of my labours or to whom I could turn for criticism. But among those who have helped or encouraged me in this work I should like specially to mention the names of two persons belonging to two very different spheres of life and activity. One of them was the late Dr. George P. Taylor, M.A., D.D., who laboured in the missionary field in Gujarat for forty years, and who was an authority on Muslim coins, being President of the Numismatic Society of India. His lamented death in 1921 deprived me early of the help and advice of a ripe scholar and discerning critic who had made a close study of Gujarat history. Another esteemed friend, in a more exalted sphere, who is happily with us, is

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H. H. Sir Taley Muhammad Khan, G.C.I.E., K.C.V.O., Nawab of Palanpur and A.D.C. to His Majesty the King-Emperor, whose love for historical studies has led him to take a very special interest in this work. The Jalori rulers of Palanpur are the heads of the oldest Muslim ruling dynasty in Gujarat, which dates its rise from the end of the 14th century, and is also one of the most ancient Muslim States in all India. I take this opportunity of offering my thanks to one who is not only a successful and popular ruler over his subjects, but withal a great gentleman.

This work begins with the Muslim conquest of Gujarat at the very end of the 13th century, and I trust that its perusal will convince those who are under the belief that their interest in the history of the province ends with the downfall of Hindu rule and the death of Karna Vaghela, the last independent Rajput ruler of Gujarat, that a great deal of what is of interest today in the way of institutions, monuments and economic life has been handed down from those four long centuries when the Muslims were the ruling power in the province, and that a study of this period is necessary for a proper understanding of the present. In order, however, to present a synthetic whole, I have supplied an introductory chapter giving a very rapid survey of the history of early and medieval Gujarat. The task of compressing within the scope of some sixty pages even a sketch of the history of fifteen centuries was not a easy one. But I have tried to compensate for the inevitable omission of many details in connection with several of the powers that have held sway in Gujarat, by some originality in the treatment and in the selection of topics for discussion. This introductory chapter has further been provided with over a dozen plates illustrating some of the most important monuments of this early

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period, especially those bequeathed to posterity by the rulers of the Chaulukya and Vaghela dynasties whose names are still dear to the Hindu population of Gujarat.

My thanks are due to the University of Bombay for a grant made some years ago towards the publication of this book. They are also due to my friend Mr. Muhammad Ibrahim Dar, M.A. (Panjab), Lecturer in Persian at the Gujarat College, Ahmadabad, and an able oriental scholar, for his help in the translation of inscriptions and of passages from the *Arabic History* of Hajji-ad-Dabir, and in various other directions.

M. S. COMMISSARIAT

AHMADABAD,
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CHAPTER XII

SULTAN MUHAMMAD SHAH II (1442-1451): SARKHEJ AND ITS EARLY MONUMENTS

Wars of the reign: Marriage of Bibi Mirki and Bibi Mughali, daughters of the Jam of Sind: Career of Shaikh Ahmad Khattu: He settles at Sarkhej: His famous mausoleum at that place (c. 1451): The great masjid at Sarkhej: Origin and early history of the Imam-Shahi sect of Pirana near Ahmadabad: Career of its founder: Secession from the Nizari Ismalis under his son Nar Muhammad: The institution of the *kakas*: The shrines at Navsari and Burhanpur: Religious tenets and social customs of the sect: Its present position and future prospects.

Sultan Ahmad Shah was succeeded in 1442 by his eldest son who came to the throne under the title of Muhammad Shah and ruled for the next nine years. He had neither the character nor the military genius of his great father, and was of a pleasure-loving disposition, and his prodigality earned for him the epithet of *zar-bakhsh* or the 'gold-giver'. Early in 1446, in continuation of his father's policy, he led an army against the Rao of Idar, the son of the late Punja. The Rao sought submission by offering to the Sultan his beautiful daughter in marriage and was restored to his kingdom. In 1449 the Sultan marched against Raval Gangadas of Champaner who being defeated in open battle took refuge in the hill-fortress of Pavagadh which was invested. Finding himself in straits, the Raval, by the offer of a handsome payment, invited the help of his neighbour Sultan Mahmud I Khalji[1] of Malwa,

Wars with Idar and Champaner

1. Sultan Mahmud I Khalji of Malwa was the son of Khan Jahan Khalji (styled Malik Mughis and Azim Humayun), the kinsman and prime minister of Sultan Hoshang Ghori of Mandu. After the latter's death, Mahmud, in conjunction with his father, succeeded in poisoning his sovereign, the weak and dissolute son of Hoshang, and ascended the throne of Malwa in 1436. A brave soldier and an equally good administrator, he enjoyed a long reign from 1436 to 1475 and under him the kingdom rose to its greatest strength. He and his successors were almost constantly at war with the Gujarat Sultans till 1531 when the kingdom of Malwa was incorporated with that of Gujarat by Sultan Bahadur.

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and the latter accepted the terms. When the ruler of Mandu reached Dohad, which belonged to Gujarat, and was the frontier town between the two Muslim kingdoms, the Gujarat Sultan thought it expedient to raise the siege of the fort of Champaner and to retire. On his return journey to his capital he fell seriously ill and died at Ahmadabad on 12th February 1451. There are other accounts of his death by poison at the hands of his nobles recorded by our authorities, but they are probably without much historical foundation.[1]

Sultan Muhammad II thus perished in 1451 at the early age of twenty-eight, and was buried in the Manek Chok by the side of his great father. The mildness of his disposition earned for him, after his death, the title of *Karim* or Merciful. His eldest son Jalal Khan succeeded him under the title of Qutb-ud-din, Ahmad Shah II. But in 1445, Muhammad's wife, Bibi Mughali, had given birth to 'a fortunate and glorious son,' who was named Fateh Khan, and who was destined to succeed his brother on the throne of Gujarat as Mahmud Begada. It is related that the Jam of Thatta in Sind had two daughters, Bibi Mirki and Bibi Mughali: the first he betrothed to Sultan Muhammad, and the other to Shah Alam, the son of the famous Saint Burhan-ud-din Qutb-ul-Alam. But the Sultan, hearing of the greater beauty of Bibi Mughali, partly by force and partly by gold, persuaded the Jam's envoys to bestow her on him and to give Bibi Mirki, who was less comely, to Shah Alam. When Shah Alam, with a sad heart, complained of this to his father, the latter replied, 'My son, it is destined that you shall marry both of them'. This prophecy, as we shall see, eventually proved true, for, after the death of his wife, Shah Alam married Bibi Mughali, the widow of Sultan Muhammad, who had for several years been living, together with her son, at the house of her sister in order to protect the boy from the evil designs of his brother the Sultan Qutb-ud-din.[2] The tombs of Bibi Mirki and Bibi Mughali, the one in black and the other in white marble, beautifully carved, are situated without any dome or canopy above them

Bibi Mirki and Bibi Mughali

1. Bayley's *Gujarat*, 129-31 ; Briggs' *Firishta*, IV, 35-36.
2. Bayley's *Gujarat*, 156.

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in the royal enclosure in the Manek Chok at Ahmadabad known as *Rani-ka-Hazira*, as already mentioned.

Career of Shaikh Ahmad Khattu

In January 1446, the fourth year of the reign of Sultan Muhammad II, the saintly Shaikh Ahmad Khattu died at the venerable age of one hundred and eight years at his chosen retreat at Sarkhej, and we must say a few words about the career of this remarkable person whose eminent virtues have given him a high place in India among the saints of Islam. He was born at Delhi in 1337–8 of a noble family in the city and is said to have squandered his patrimony in his youth. At the age of thirty he attached himself as a disciple to Baba Ishaq Maghrabi,[1] a well-known divine who had settled at Khattu, a village to the east of Nagor in the Jodhpur State. On the death of his preceptor in 1374, Shaikh Ahmad, now known by the cognomen of Khattu, decided on a pilgrimage to the holy places of Islam. He travelled to Arabia by way of Patan Anhilvad and the port of Cambay, being well entertained at the former town by the father of Farhat-ul-Mulk Rasti Khan who was at the time governor of Gujarat under the court of Delhi.

He settles at Sarkhej, 1400-1446

Many years later, Shaikh Ahmad returned to India landing at Thatta in Sind, and in 1399 we find him at Delhi where, as already related, he boldly interceded with the terrible conqueror Timur for the lives and liberties of the citizens of the capital. He now elected to settle down in Gujarat and in 1400 arrived in this province at the time when Muzaffar Khan was the nominal governor on behalf of the tottering Tughluq Empire of Delhi. He made the village of Sarkhej, not far from Asawal, and about six miles south-west of the later city of Ahmadabad, the place of his residence. The honoured part which the saint played in the foundation of the new capital of the Saltanat in 1411 has already been mentioned. In fact, the suggestion in this connection appears to have been made by the saint himself to the young Sultan. Shaikh Ahmad was

1. Shaikh Ishaq initiated the neophyte into the doctrines of the Silsila Maghrabi, the Western or African sect, in which Ahmad attained such distinction that he was given the title of 'the Lamp.' His surpassing learning and piety also secured for him the designation of *Qutb-al-Aqtab*, 'the pole-star of pole-stars.'

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by this time over 70 years of age, but he was destined to live on for a whole generation more. The mutual regard between him and the Sultan is said to have continued undisturbed till the latter's death in 1442. Four years later, on January 13, 1446, the saint bade farewell to this world, having attained the patriarchal age of 108 solar or 111 lunar years. Among other honorific epithets, Shaikh Ahmad also bore the title of *Ganj Bakhsh*, i.e., the treasure-giver, probably in reference to his generous character, and it is still commonly associated with his name.[1]

The mausoleum of Ahmad Khattu at Sarkhej, 1451

To commemorate the fame of his family's spiritual preceptor, and of a saint so famous and so pious, the Sultan Muhammad II began in 1446 to erect a splendid mausoleum at the place where Shaikh Ahmad had resided for well-nigh half a century, and the work was completed during the reign of his son and successor Sultan Qutb-ud-din Ahmad. The imposing Tomb of Shaikh Ahmad Khattu is the largest of its kind in Gujarat and measures a hundred feet square. Over the main entrance is a quatrain in Persian inscribed on marble.[2] The sarcophagus in the centre of the building is divided off from the rest of the interior by a screen of brass panels worked in beautiful patterns. The exterior walls of the mausoleum are also panelled with trellised windows of perforated stone-work in every variety of design. The Rauza is surmounted by a large central dome which supports as its finial a brass *pipal* leaf as in other royal buildings of the Ahmad Shahi rulers. The great monument stands on an elevated platform which is approached on one side by an exquisite little pavilion raised on sixteen pillars.[3]

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1. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi Supplt.*, op. cit., 32-33; Blochmann's *Ain*, I, 507 *n*; Jarrett's *Ain*, III, 371; *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, trans. by Ranking, I, 357-8; Bayley's *Gujarat*, 90-91.

2. The quatrain has been rendered thus:
'When the ocean of Ahmad's palm pours forth its pearls,
The skirt of hope becomes the treasure of Parviz;
No wonder if, in order to bend before his shrine,
The whole surface of the earth raises its head.'
Two Persian words in the last line, viz., *Sar Khez*, form a paronomasia or play upon the name Sarkhej. (J. Burgess, *Muhn. Archr. of Ahmadabad*, Pt. I, 48).

3. *Ibid.*, 46-48.

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The Masjid at Sarkhej, near Ahmadabad, *c.* 1450 (p. 133)

Corridor on one side of the courtyard of the Masjid at Sarkhej

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The great mosque at Sarkhej, adjoining the Rauza of Shaikh Ahmad Khattu, has an area about half that of the Jami Masjid at Ahmadabad, and was probably built about the same time as the Tomb, though its erection is traditionally ascribed to the Saint himself. It differs from those of an earlier date in having no arched façade and in the roof being of uniform height throughout and without minarets. But the mosque is 'the perfection of architectural design', and we can hardly dispute the statement of a competent critic that, except the Moti Masjid at Agra, there is probably no mosque in India that surpasses this in simple elegance.[1] The atmosphere of reverent repose which pervades this beautiful House of Prayer in the solitudes of Sarkhej still makes it a charming place of retreat to many. No wonder then that, at a later date, Sarkhej became a favourite resort of the great Sultan Mahmud Begada, who, as we shall record, excavated the great tank, and erected on its sides a magnificent palace and a mausoleum for himself and his family, thus completing the noble group of monuments which have given to this spot so prominent a place for so many centuries in the history of Gujarat. The undying fame of the Saint of Sarkhej has survived the lapse of five centuries, and is attested by the thousands of pilgrims who flock to his tomb annually from the neighbouring city.

The masjid at Sarkhej and its style

To the second half of the fifteenth century belongs the origin of the well-known religious sect of the Imam-Shahis in Gujarat and the establishment of the head-quarters of their *Pirs* at the place called Pirana near the village of Giramtha about nine miles south of Ahmadabad in a well-wooded country. The information hitherto available to scholars on the subject, found in the volumes of the Bombay Gazetteer,[2] has now been supplemented by an excellent historical monograph, entitled *The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujarat,*

Origin of the Imam-Shahi sect of Pirana near Ahmadabad

1. Jas. Burgess, op. cit., 49. In the opinion of Sir John Marshall, 'its beauty is due to its chaste simplicity and classic restraint; and indeed, considered on its merits as a pillared hall, it is difficult to imagine how it could have been improved upon. But whether a hall such as this, constructed on purely Hindu principles, fulfils the Muslim ideal of a *Masjid*, is open to question.' (*Cambridge History of India*, III, 611).

2. Bombay Gazetteer, IV, Ahmedabad, 287-90; also IX, Gujarat Population, Part I, 167-72.

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written by Mr. Ivanow and published in the Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1936.[1] The learned author of this paper has laid under contribution most of the available literature, generally of a religious character, bearing on this subject, and has given a complete short survey of the origin, the history and the doctrines of the Pirana Saiyids and their half-Hindu, half-Muslim, followers.[2]

The sect an offshoot of the Nizari Ismaili creed in India

It is now generally known that Shiah missionaries of the Nizari or Persian Ismaili creed began to appear in various parts of Western and Northern India in the thirteenth century, and even much earlier, for the purpose of propagating the faith of Islam, and the name under which the new religious doctrines which they preached came to be known in India was the *Satpanth,* i.e., 'The True Path'. Imam Shah, the eponymous founder of the Pirana sect, was descended from Pir Sadr-ud-din, the head of the Ismaili missionaries in India, and the tombs of his father and grandfather may still be seen in and near Uchh in the Bhawalpur State. Our principal authority for the career of Imam Shah and his successors is the *Manazil-ul-Aqtab,* the only work written in Persian which can be relied upon for its historical details and chronology to some extent. It was compiled, soon after 1822, probably under the patronage of Saiyid Bara Miya (Saiyid Badr-ud-din) of Pirana who flourished in the first quarter of the 19th century.[3]

Career of Imam Shah: he settles at Giramtha near Ahmadabad

The Ahmadabad volume of the Bombay Gazetteer, on the basis of tradition, dates the arrival of Imam Shah in Gujarat about 1449 during the reign of Sultan Muhammad II. We learn on the more reliable authority of the *Manazil-ul-Aqtab* that he was the son of Pir Hasan Kabir-ud-din of Uchh and that he was born at that town in H. 856, i.e., A.D. 1452. After his father's death he went to Persia and appears to have been sent back by his superiors, the Ismaili

1. *Journal, B. B. Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series, Vol. XII, 1936.
2. This literature consists partly of the old religious works written by the early Pirs or Imams in the Middle Ages, and partly of a new body which has sprung up in Gujarati attempting to clear up the history and doctrines of the Khojas and the Imam-Shahis.
3. W. Ivanow, *The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujarat*, 26-27.

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Imams, to preach in Gujarat where he acquired great success with the rural population (c. 1471). He settled at the village of Giramtha, about nine miles from Ahmadabad, some time during the early period of the reign of Sultan Mahmud Begada, and, by the force of his preaching and his miracles,[1] succeeded in attaching to Islam a very large following from the Leva and Kadva Kunbis, the Shekhdas, and other sections of the Hindu agricultural population of those parts. The descendants of these converts are now generally known as Momnas and Matia Kunbis. Imam Shah died at the seat of his labours about 1513 or 1520, and was buried in a fine mausoleum[2] which he is said to have erected at considerable cost during his lifetime at Pirana—the seat of the *Pirs*—as the place came to be called. It may be mentioned that during his lifetime he and also the converted community remained faithful to the headship of the Ismaili Imams in Persia.[3]

Imam Shah was succeeded by his son Nar or Nur Muhammad, who was born about 1470. He was the author of a work written in Sindhi and entitled *Satveni-ji Vel* ('Creeper of the True Religion'), a treatise on rituals and Imams, which is of considerable value to the student of the history of this sect[4]. It is not clear when he introduced the reform which had very serious consequences. But it is certain that under his orders the practice of sending a part of the tithe or religious tax, known as *dasondh*, which was paid by his followers, to the Ismaili Imam in Persia was discontinued, and with it the claims to headship of that pontiff over the Pirana sect were automatically dissolved. Nar Muhammad thus stood out as the Imam of the community in Gujarat. The consequences of this split between the local

Nar Muhammad Shah succeeds at Pirana—his important reforms

1. Imam Shah is said to have brought down rain to the starving agriculturists after two years of drought. Another story is that a number of pilgrims were passing by Giramtha on their way to Benares and Imam Shah offered to take them there. They agreed, and in a trice found themselves in the holy city, where they paid their vows and bathed in the Ganges. Recovering from the trance they awoke to find themselves at Pirana! (Bombay Gazetteer, IV, Ahmedabad, 287).
2. There is a legend to the effect that at its foundation was laid a golden brick which Imam Shah had brought when he visited paradise during his stay in Persia!
3. W. Ivanow, op. cit., 39-42.
4. *Ibid.*, 23-4; 29.

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sect in Gujarat and their cultured and progressive co-religionists in Persia may be described in the words of Mr. Ivanow, whose judgment deserves to be respected:

> 'The split, caused by Nar Muhammad's pretensions, has done incalculable harm to his sect. Instead of being followers of Ismailism, the ancient and highly philosophical branch of Islam, with its great cultural traditions and the mentality of a world religion, they have become nothing but a petty community of "Piranawallas," a kind of inferior Hindus, and very doubtful Muslims. Anyhow, orthodox Muslims do not regard them as Muslims, and orthodox Hindus do not regard them as Hindus. Such a position of utter isolation can only be endured in the primitive conditions of village life, illiteracy and ignorance. As soon as the standard of living, education, etc., rises, the followers cease to find satisfaction in the faith of their forefathers, and turn to the religion of the more cultured strata. Thus the sect automatically loses all its cultural elements, and rapidly sinks deeper and deeper, with no prospect of early regeneration. So it is at present, and most probably so it always was in the past.'[1]

Nar Muhammad Shah died, according to the *Manazil,* about the year 1533–4 and he was buried near his father in the mausoleum at Pirana. Within the strong walled enclosure at this place may be seen, besides the central Rauza of Imam Shah, other shrines known as Nurshah's, Surabhai's, Bala Muhammad's, Baqir Ali's, etc., from the names of various *Pirs* or Saiyids who were at different periods the heads of the sect, and these shrines are worshipped by their special followers, who are known as the *Athiyas,* the *Satiyas* and the *Panchyas.* The significance of these designations will be discussed later. Hardly any of these monuments has a claim to architectural beauty.

The various shrines at Pirana

It is not necessary to trace further the history of the Imam Shahi sect at this place. A passing reference may,

1. W. Ivanow, op. cit., 45.

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however, be made to two or three features of its organisation. One of these is in connection with the function and the power of the *kakas*, an institution apparently quite unique among Muslim religious organisations. According to the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, a *kaka* was originally the headman of a converted Hindu community appointed by the *Pir*, or his missionary, from amongst his fellow-converts. His duty was to give instruction, to settle disputes, and above all to collect the religious dues which he had to forward to the *Pir*. Thus the original *kakas* played a prominent role in bringing about mutual understanding between the missionaries and their converts. In course of time the institution penetrated into the centre when the quarrels and rivalries of the sons of Nar Muhammad Shah for *pirship* brought about the final legalisation of the position of the *kakas*. According to the disposition made by Nar Muhammad, a specially appointed head *kaka* was to function at Pirana to collect the taxes and offerings and to distribute them among the various members of his family. He was appointed for life and had to take a vow of celibacy, receiving for himself only his food and his clothes. In course of time, and under several of the feeble successors of Imam Shah, the *kakas* not only increased in numbers but became all-powerful, and the religious and financial control of the various shrines and Rauzas at Pirana, of which they were appointed guardians, passed largely into their hands so that they were often able to challenge the powers of the head Pirs or Saiyids. They have proved an inexhaustible source of intrigue, misery and litigation to the community. A large number of the houses at Pirana belong to these *kakas* or devotees.[1]

The institution of the *kakas*: their origin and powers

Another important feature of the Imam Shahi organisation is the distinction between the *Athiyas*, the *Satiyas* and the *Panchyas*, referred to above, which comes gradually into existence in later centuries to designate various groups of devotees who are the followers of successive or rival Saiyids at Pirana. The exact significance of the terms at the time of their origin is open to question. It has been stated that the

The distinction between *Athiyas*, *Satiyas* and *Panchyas*

1. W. Ivanow, op. cit., 38-9.

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term *Athiya* was applied to the descendants of Sa'id Khan, the younger son of Nur Muhammad Shah, as opposed to the descendants of his elder brothers, and that it means 'the party of eight,' because the *pirs* who were the successors of Sa'id Khan were followed by eight different castes and sub-castes. The group of *Satiyas,* 'the party of seven castes', comes into existence later on; and the last and latest of the sections are the *Panchyas,* 'the party of five.' In addition to these groups, the *Manazil* always refers to the party of those who were 'faithful to the tomb of Imam Shah', the denotation of which is not very clear.[1]

The shrines of the Satpanthi sect at Navsari and Burhanpur

The Imam-Shahis, or Satpanthis, are found at present in large numbers in Gujarat, Kathiawar and Cutch, as also in Birar and Khandesh. Besides the principal headquarters at Pirana, there are two other important centres frequented by the followers of the creed. One of these is at Navsari, near Surat, where stands the shrine of Sat Gur Nur, a saint who is believed to have been contemporary with, if not much anterior to, Imam Shah, and about whose arrival and proselytising activities in these parts hardly any reliable information is available. According to tradition, however, the shrine is of very considerable antiquity and it is also held in veneration by other communities besides the Imam-Shahis. The other centre is at Burhanpur in the Central Provinces, or rather at Bahadurpur, a village four miles distant from Burhanpur. This was the place selected for his residence by Saiyid Muhammad Shahi Dula who left Pirana early in the 17th century and went to settle near Burhanpur, then situated in the Khandesh Subah, and a very large, populous and flourishing capital town. Saiyid Muhammad Shah is said to have worked many miracles which led to the conversion of large numbers of Hindus in the valley of the Tapti. He died in 1067 H. or A. D. 1657, and was buried at the village of Bahadurpur where his shrine is still the centre for pilgrimage among the Satpanthis of the districts of Khandesh, Birar and Nimar. His descendants who now, strangely enough, accept the Sunnite tradition, and have only local influence, have been

1. W. Ivanow, op. cit., 48.

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designated as the 'independent Eastern branch of the Satpanthi sect'.[1]

As regards their fundamental religious doctrines, the Imam-Shahis acknowledge the unity of the one Supreme Being who is Allah and accept Muhammad as his Apostle and Prophet, and this essential creed marks them out as faithful Muslims. They attach, however, little importance to the *namaz* or daily prayers and in their ritual they have not departed much from the usual practices of their caste. They believe in the theory of incarnation (*avatar*) and consider their Imam as a divinely inspired leader and participating in the Substance of God. The sect accepts the principal cosmogonical beliefs of the Hindus as regards the original scheme of the creation of the world. The Prophet is called *Pir* or *Gur* and in the course of speculation the difference between him and the Imams is hardly recognised. The Quran is regarded as a Divine revelation and it is allegorically interpreted or explained by the Imams by the method which is known as *alankar*. These allegories are to be found in their religious texts written by the early *pirs* and which are known as *gnans*,[2] the recitation of which generally takes the place of the reading of the Quran, for the *kakas* are rarely familiar with the Arabic alphabet.

The religious tenets of the Imam-Shahis

Believe in Allah and Muhammad

Kuran

Imam Shah and his successors, like the early Ismaili missionaries, deliberately left the theological and moral system of their converts undisturbed in order to put as little obstacle as possible in the way of their proselytizing activities. The result has been that the spirit of caste and its regulations still dominate the customs, the ideas, the prejudices and practically the whole life of the members of the community who are thus in their manners and dress hardly distinguishable from the Hindus. Marriage and other ceremonials are largely regulated by the customs of the caste to

The dominating influence of Hindu caste customs and taboos

1. W. Ivanow, op. cit., 49-50; 69-70.

2. The *Gnans* (from Sanskrit *gnanam*, knowledge) are sacred hymns or versified didactic or ecstatic treatises, written in the form of *slokas*, in various vernaculars. They vary in their contents from almost pure Sufism to pure Hinduism. In the earliest times they were not written, but committed to memory by the faithful. Many of them are in old Sindhi. (W. Ivanow, op. cit., 29).

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which the devotees belong. Among the Matias the dead are cremated but the bones which remain are buried. Those who can afford it, pay large amounts for permission to bury these bones in the courtyard in front of Imam Shah's mausoleum at Pirana which is paved with scores of small slabs bearing the names of the deceased in Gujarati. Every visitor to Pirana is struck with this special feature of this interesting place. The *kakas*, however, are buried without being cremated.

Mr. Ivanow on the present and the future position of the sect

The present not very satisfactory position of the Imam-Shahi community and its future prospects have been summed up as follows by a scholarly and independent investigator who has made a closer study of the sect and its history and institutions than has been done before by any other writer on the subject in English:

> 'The necropolis of Pirana undoubtedly is an extremely interesting relic of Mediaeval India. At present it is rapidly declining not only due to the unceasing quarrels and litigation between the rival parties of Sayyids and the *kakas*, but also, in a greater degree, owing to the 'modern spirit' in India. This brings rapidly growing religious indifference, political agitation, and aggressive propaganda of various Hindu organisations, especially the Arya Samaj, which draw a great number of the followers of Imam Shah back to Hinduism, while, on the other side, the Sayyids have neither energy, nor money, nor education to carry on missionary work. Some of them are very learned in their *gnans*, but know nothing besides this'.[1]

1. W. Ivanow, op. cit., 59.

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